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In the afternoon a visit was made to the book-jobbing establishment of F. Volckmar, a colossal business with clients in all countries, and employing 900 persons. After this, the Enders book-bindery was inspected, where astonishing things were performed by machinery.

For the evening, the city of Leipzig invited the librarians to a performance of an operetta, "Der alte Dessauer," in the New Theatre. The performance seemed tame compared with Broadway offerings of that sort.

Friday, the last day of the conference, was devoted to the "Bugra," the name commonly given to the Exposition. The word "Bugra" is made up of the beginning letters of the words *Buch* and *Graphik*. At nine o'clock on that day, Geheimrat Boysen read a paper descriptive of the Bugra. When the plan of the Exposition was first outlined, in 1912, Boysen was entrusted with the organization of a library section, which he accomplished with great success. His paper, therefore, was the very best kind of preparation for a visit to the Exposition. After the reading of this paper, the A. L. A. representative extended a special invitation to the foreign librarians to inspect the American exhibit. When the party arrived at the Bugra, they were received by the President, Dr. Volkmann, and spent the rest of the day looking over the exhibits.

The final getting together was at a dinner in the restaurant of the Bugra, which was numerously attended. Many speeches were made. Especially interesting to Americans was the speech of Geheimrat Schwenke, of the Berlin Royal Library, in the course of which the speaker spoke warmly of his recollection of the cordial reception which he had met with from American colleagues. He spoke also of American library methods which he had studied, advising his hearers to look into these methods, which they might do with profit. A wish was expressed that the entire library section in the Bugra might be kept together and permanently exhibited in some convenient place. In the course

of the evening, Dr. Boysen brought a small American flag, on a standard, and placed it on the table in front of the Americans. Nothing could have been more cordial than the manner in which the Americans were received by their German colleagues.

The German Library Association has accepted an invitation to hold its next meeting in Vienna.

DONALD HENDRY,
A. L. A. Delegate.

A CLEARING HOUSE FOR LIBRARY LABOR SAVING DEVICES

(Note.—Shortly after the Washington conference in May last, Mr. C. Seymour Thompson, who had executive charge of the exhibit of library labor saving devices, installed under the supervision of the A. L. A. Committee on library administration, submitted the following paper to that committee. We believe the membership at large will be interested in the suggestions and recommendations he makes.—EDITOR.)

In reviewing the work done in preparation for the recent exhibit, and on consideration of the results of that work, it seems to me that the chief lesson to be learned from the exhibit is the fact that only a beginning has been made in the work which ought to be done along these lines. The exhibit presented an opportunity to become acquainted with many of the most important labor-saving devices now available, but by no means with all. Furthermore, new devices are being put on the market every year, old devices are being improved, and librarians are discovering new uses for old devices. I should therefore like to see the recent exhibit followed by a more complete study, and to see this study followed by the establishment of a permanent clearing house, for the purpose of collecting and disseminating information concerning new devices and new labor-saving methods.

To illustrate the importance of such a proceeding two examples may be sufficient: (1) In my opinion one of the most important parts of the recent exhibit was the Universal pasting machine. I do not know how many libraries are now using this or a similar machine, but a great many would have been benefited if their atten-

tion had been called to the machine by the first library which tried it and found it useful. (2) Most of us, if we had received a catalog and price list of automatic telephone counters, would have dropped it in the waste basket or placed it in our trade catalog collection to be of use to someone else. It occurred to some librarian that these counters might be used in recording circulation statistics, but the idea was not given the wide circulation which it deserved.

In its report submitted at the Kaaterskill conference in 1913 the Committee on Administration suggested the possibility that a very comprehensive survey might some time be made, under the advisory direction of the committee, of all branches of library work, with the purpose of first collecting all needful information and then submitting "definite suggestions toward the improvement of this work in the direction of greater efficiency."

Such a survey ought surely to include a study of library equipment and of mechanical labor-saving devices. It seems to me that this study might well be made the first step toward the complete survey, for the following reasons: there would be many advantages in making this study as soon as possible, as a supplement to the work recently done; the study could be more quickly completed than a study of the widely varying practice, in different libraries, in such processes as the two already investigated by the committee.

I note the committee's statement that this survey can not be undertaken unless "others can be induced to undertake the details." If the information and the experience which I have had the pleasure of gaining during the recent work would make it likely that I could render satisfactory service, I should be glad to volunteer to undertake the further study along the same lines, under the direction of the committee. To present my views in more concrete form I would make the following suggestions for the consideration of the committee.

1. That mechanical labor-savers and general equipment and supplies are so closely connected that both should be covered by the study.

2. That the study should include also all time-saving methods in any department of library work, so far (and only so far) as they involve the use of some special equipment or mechanical devices.

3. That, as the first step, a questionnaire should be sent to as many as possible of the libraries of the country. Prior to the recent exhibit information and suggestions were received from only about 50 libraries. There were practically no responses from small libraries, which it is important to reach.

4. That this questionnaire should ask for the following information.

a. A list of *all* labor-saving devices in use in the library.

b. A statement of all the uses to which each device is put.

c. A statement of the librarian's opinion, based on his experience, of the merits and the defects of each device.

d. Similar lists and statements concerning the furniture and equipment of the library.

e. Description of time-saving methods employed, of the kind noted (2) above.

5. That the replies to this questionnaire should be supplemented by all information which could be obtained from the manufacturers of various devices and equipment.

6. That a full, careful report should be published. This report should answer innumerable questions such as the following:

How many libraries are using the rotary letter copying machine instead of the carbon copy method? How many have tried the machine but did not like it? What are its advantages and disadvantages?

How many libraries are using the visible indexing devices? For what purposes have these been found useful? For what purposes are they not well adapted?

What interior telephone systems have been found most satisfactory?

There is certainly no reason why, in

such a report, we should hesitate in recommending a good device. If a device is not good, should we hesitate to make the fact known? We brand one book as excellent and another as mediocre; one as inspiring and elevating, another as immoral or insipid. Why need we hesitate to announce that seventeen libraries have tried the XYZ interior telephone system and only one of them likes it? Personal preference, of course, is an important feature, and should be taken into consideration. The central library staff in one city will use no pencil sharpener but the Jupiter; the staff in one of the branches in the same system will use none but the Boston. One librarian considers the photostat far superior to the cameragraph; another prefers, in every way, the cameragraph. The dictaphone is preferred by some who have used both dictation machines; the Edison dictating machine is preferred by others. From such statements the inquiring librarian can deduce that either of the contrasted devices is good and that he can not go far wrong in choosing whichever seems to him best adapted to his needs.

Some of the information collected, however, it might be inadvisable to publish in the printed report. For this reason (as well as to keep informed concerning new devices) there should be the clearing house. For example, a librarian knows nothing of the merits of a \$35 adding machine or of the veracity of the agent who wants to sell it. The printed report does

not tell him and he writes to the clearing house for information. If he learns that eight or ten libraries have used the machine with satisfactory results he will feel safe in giving his order; the experiences of others tell him the machine is good, but his own judgment will of course have to decide whether it is needed and can be used to advantage for his purposes. If, on the other hand, he learns that eight or ten libraries have tried the machine and report that it is not satisfactory, he will be saved the expense of an experiment.

I should suppose that the time required for the study and the preparation of the report would be between one and two years. Thereafter, the functions of the "clearing house" would be permanent, but comparatively simple.

All of which is respectfully submitted for the consideration of the committee.

C. SEYMOUR THOMPSON.

A CORRECTION

By a most unfortunate and regrettable oversight the secretary of the A. L. A. neglected to include the name of the Buffalo public library in the list of those who had generously contributed copy to the Supplement of the A. L. A. Index to General Literature. The Buffalo Library analyzed 15 books for the Index and its work was among the best submitted. The secretary apologizes most humbly for this inexcusable oversight.

G. B. U.